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**Town of Wellesley Participated in a Full-Scale Emergency Preparedness Exercise at  
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care at Wellesley Gateway**

On Saturday, September 12, 2009, health departments from Canton, Dedham, Milton, Needham, Norwood, Wellesley, and Westwood (emergency preparedness Region 4B, Sub-region 3), partnered with the Harvard School of Public Health Center for Public Health Preparedness (HSPHCPHP) to conduct a benchmark exercise for their community's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers and other non-MRC volunteers. MRC volunteers are residents with clinical and non-clinical skills, who will assist their town's health department and other first responders in the event of a local, large-scale public health emergency.

The exercise was held in Wellesley at Harvard Pilgrim Health Care (HPHC) at Wellesley Gateway. Wellesley Health Department was the host agency. Staff from Wellesley's Fire and Police departments participated in the drill. Objectives included: testing and assessing the ability of the host community's health department to act as a lead agency, in the organization and implementation of an emergency dispensing site in their community; demonstrating the use of the Incident Command System during a public health emergency; delivering just-in-time training for volunteers, and overseeing delivery of screening, mass vaccinations, and care to "patients."

Volunteers were apprised of a mock outbreak one day prior to the exercise, and asked to respond to the site (the next day) to set up and operate an emergency dispensing site for vaccinations. Upon arrival, participants were briefed about the fake outbreak, and received just-in-time training based on their assignments and roles.

According to lead facilitator Dr. Paul Biddinger, Associate Director of HSPHCPHP, "Public health leaders in these towns have planned and practiced diligently with their medical volunteers for several years to be ready in case of emergency. Today's exercise represents another successful example of how the two groups can work together to strengthen the communities' emergency preparedness."

Sub-region 3 has conducted full-scale, multi-community exercises in the past; one in 2006 at the Broadmeadow School in Needham, focusing on emergency dispensing site (EDS) operations, and the other in 2007 at the Norwood Civic Center, exploring the functionality of an Alternate Care Site. All the exercises were facilitated and evaluated by HSPHCPHP. For more information on emergency preparedness in the Town of Wellesley please visit [www.wellesleyma.gov/health](http://www.wellesleyma.gov/health).

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